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Equality for all

I AM writing to respond to Carol Wisner's letter of July 27, "Topfree: A non-issue." She says that she has never known a woman who has expressed a need or desire to be topless in public. I have a need — a need to be equal under the law.

And I have a desire, at age 64 — to be as relaxed and comfortable as I like, with my shirt off if I choose.

However, "need and desire" is only partly relevant, because the underlying issue is freedom and equality. Because this right has been denied us women for so very long, Wisner can say that the point is "what is considered appropriate in a particular culture."

Our particular culture as it relates to topfree rests on a law which hasn't changed for women, even though it has changed for men.

Is Wisner old enough to remember when men had to keep their tops covered? How did that law change? Some men tested it in 1936 — and were arrested for going topfree in public.

Now women want equality under the law. Does Wisner believe that biology is destiny, that simply because women develop breasts, they must be covered? No, it is the law that must change, and the culture will change accordingly.

It is Wisner's opinion that to work for equality between men and women on this issue is "ridiculous," and that this issue trivializes the more important goals women have to achieve. What is trivial about equality?

Equal protection under the law is the point — wherever and whenever it comes up. Maybe when we women have equal rights, including the right to be topfree, topless bars and other exploitation of women as sex objects will diminish.

The right to go topfree is, in essence, like any other legal right. The denial of any individual right is an instrument for the maintenance of inequality. And equality, like freedom, is indivisible.

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